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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7775
INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC 3111
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS NAIROBI 002690

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - Harassment of Two Media Outlets

Summary

¶11. (SBU) The week of November 24 witnessed two incidents of apparent media harassment in Somalia. Early in the week, the Director of Warsan Radio was arrested by Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces for "giving out misleading information about the TFG." The charges appear to stem from coverage of the execution of a person accused of murdering a TFG official. Later in the week, journalists from Universal TV were arrested by TFG police in Mogadishu, reportedly for having broadcast unfavorable coverage of the security situation there. Post is investigating both incidents and has registered concern with TFG leadership. End summary.

Arrests in Baidoa

¶12. (SBU) On November 25, the director of Warsan Radio, Hilal Sheik Shuayb, was arrested by TFG forces in Baidoa on charges of broadcasting misleading information about the TFG. The station was said to have carried a live report on November 25 regarding a TFG military court's execution of a man accused of taking part in the recent killing of the most senior TFG military commander in Baidoa. Our contacts indicate the TFG authorities in Baidoa did not approve of the station's broadcast of a report that the suspect was executed immediately following a military court ruling. Shuayb was held overnight. The station was not shut down in conjunction with this arrest.

¶13. (SBU) After Shuayb's release the following day, Hindia Haji Mohamed of Warsan Radio and Muktar Mohamed Atosh of Radio Jubba (and who also reportedly works for VOA in some capacity, likely as a stringer) were arrested by TFG police. The police reportedly arrested the two on charges that they "did not use correct wording" while reporting on the same execution case. Sources tell us the journalists avoided the word "murderer" to describe the executed person, which the TFG police reportedly interpreted as using "soft language" in reporting on the killing of the senior TFG official.

Harassment of Universal TV Staff

¶14. (SBU) Late in the same week, a group of local reporters for the London-based Universal TV was arrested in Mogadishu. A contact at Shabelle Media, which reported on the incident, told us the arrest was carried out by a former militia group-turned police force who are known for arbitrary arrests with no clear instruction from their

seniors. The journalists were held briefly at Mogadishu's Wadajir District station and had their equipment confiscated, but were later released after intervention by the District Officer, Ahmed Dai. The police officers accused the journalists of bias in their reporting of the current situation in Mogadishu. The Shabelle contact said this kind of complaint is not unusual as many news reports are bound to be objectionable to either the TFG or the opposition.

Post Actions

¶15. (SBU) As has been our practice in cases like these, we have contacted the stations and, where possible, the reporters involved in the cases. In addition, we have contacted the TFG's Minister of Information to inquire about the facts of the incidents and to register our concern. The Minister, who also serves as Deputy Prime Minister and who is currently heavily involved in the Djibouti process, has not replied to date, but we expect a response soon.

RANNEBERGER